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P A P E R S
IN
A G R I C U L T U R E.

No. 1.

The LARGE SILVER MEDAL was voted to Mr. T. JOHNSTON, 137, George Street, Glasgow, for his proposed Use of Charcoal as a Material for Draining.

MR. JOHNSTON'S communication to the Society proposes to substitute for the materials usually employed in filling drains—namely, brushwood, broom, gorse, or heath—the very same substances, only after they have been charred; as being lighter, more porous, and hardly susceptible of decay.

This suggestion, it is believed, is quite new; and though no attempts to reduce it to practice have been made by Mr. Johnston, yet all known facts and analogies are strongly in its favour. The charring might be performed, in the usual way, by the side of the drains, the brushwood, &c. being made up into fagots of a suitable size previous to charring; and each fagot, if necessary, might be secured by a single band of iron wire near each

end, to prevent it from falling to pieces in removing from the hearth to the drain : a light cradle of wicker-work, of the length of a fagot, would probably be found the most convenient machine for its conveyance. It is, however, not at all unlikely that there would be no real necessity to preserve the fagots entire ; for it is evident, that a heap of sprays of charcoal, broken into pieces two or three inches long, and without any regularity in their arrangement, would form a more porous material than an equal bulk of stones. A drain so filled would never be choked except by particles of earth carried in by the water that flowed through it ; for, as the material would always remain, the superincumbent earth would not fall down, as it now usually does, to choke the passage when the bushes which supported it have decayed. Neither is it likely that moles would willingly cross a drain filled with charcoal ; and, if so, another very usual cause of the destruction of drains would be avoided.

In many districts of this country where peat is abundant, this substance, when charred, would probably be found a most valuable material, both for filling drains and for building hollow ones. The brick-like form into which peat is usually cut, and the hardness and porosity of the same when charred in a close oven, would constitute a light and excellent material, much cheaper, and probably better, than either bricks or tiles.